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FM AMEMBASSY TIRANA
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INFO RUCNISL/ISLAMIC COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L TIRANA 000184

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/10/2018
TAGS: [PREL](#) [KISL](#) [KV](#) [AL](#)
SUBJECT: ALBANIA'S FOREIGN MINISTER ON OIC AND KOSOVO

REF: A. TIRANA 10

[1](#)B. STATE 22377

[1](#)C. STATE 20646

Classified By: Ambassador John L. Withers II, Reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: Albanian Foreign Minister Lulzim Basha expressed frustration with the Organization of the Islamic Conference, not only its slowness to recognize Kosovo's independence, but efforts by "heavyweight" members to marginalize Albania's participation in the organization. He suggested Albania may reconsider its OIC membership. In the meantime, Albania is seeking to find groups within the OIC that might recognize Kosovo soon. Basha suggested the Gulf States and Egypt might be convinced to act. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (C) At a March 7 dinner with the Ambassador, Foreign Minister Lulzim Basha said he did not think the Organization of the Islamic Conference would produce a statement calling for Kosovar recognition at the upcoming March 13-14 Summit. Basha cited Indonesia as the problem. However, Albania believed sub-groups within the OIC could be persuaded to recognize Kosovo. Basha thought the Gulf States were the most promising and could be convinced to recognize. Saudi Arabia, he declared, stands ready to help with this group and has indicated that it will recognize.

[1](#)3. (C) Basha also cited Egypt as a possibility. He outlined Egypt's importance to Albania and told Ambassador that the Speaker of the Egyptian Parliament was of Albanian descent. Basha said he had held long talks with the Egyptian Foreign Ministry to encourage recognition. Russia, he said, was also pressuring Egypt strongly not to recognize, but Basha believed Egypt could be swayed in Kosovo's favor.

[1](#)4. (C) Basha expressed his frustration with an unspecified group of "heavyweights" in the OIC who, he said, were dismissive of Albania and sought to marginalize Albania's participation in the group. Basha told the Ambassador he was tired of this behavior. Why should Albania be a member of a group if it got nothing in return? If this attitude continued, Basha said he would move to downgrade Albania's relations with the OIC.

[1](#)5. (C) COMMENT: Albania continues to work hard to expand recognition for Kosovo. Basha's stated frustration with the OIC could signal a first step toward Albania's eventually disentangling itself from the Islamic organization, where Albania's membership has never rested entirely easily with the secular Albanian population at large (Ref A).

WITHERS